

PROPOSED SUMMIT LAKE WIND ENERGY PLANT BY RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS IN L'ANSE TOWNSHIP

21 JUL 18

POSITION PAPER

UPPER PENINSULA ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

To: L'Anse Township Board

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition (UPEC), representing hundreds of U.P. and other Michigan citizens, wish to convey our position on the proposed Summit Lake Wind Energy Project.

UPEC believes that global warming is one of the gravest threats to our planet and humanity, and that the United States must work toward significant reductions in the emission of carbon dioxide, which is a major contributor to global warming of the atmosphere. The utilization of renewable energy sources is one of the principal means for reducing carbon emissions, and wind energy can play a role in providing renewable electricity and a reduction in carbon emissions. However, there are many well-documented environmental, social, and human health impacts from wind energy plants, depending on where projects are sited and how they are operated. UPEC believes the construction of a large industrial wind energy plant in the Huron Mountains would have large-scale, significant, long-lasting negative impacts to the natural environment, and to the local economy and well-being of the citizens of the Upper Peninsula. UPEC urges the responsible local authorities to approve the L'Anse Township Planning Commission's proposed amendment to the zoning ordinance that states, "A Large Wind Energy Conversion System may only be located in areas in L'Anse Township that are zoned Conservation/Recreation or General Industrial."

Renewable Energy Systems (RES), a global construction company based in the U.K., has proposed to build a Large Wind Energy Conversion System (LWECS) in the Huron Mountains of the Upper Peninsula, stretching from Herman to the McCormick Tract Wilderness. The turbines would be located on land owned by the Weyerhaeuser Company, a real estate investment trust (REIT). The number of wind turbines and areal extent of the project area has been a moving target, with the number of turbines having been discussed numbering between 35 and 55. Turbines would measure approximately 492' from the ground to the tip of the turbine blades in the "up" position, which is

nearly the height from the water's surface to the highest point of the Mackinaw Bridge superstructure. According to information provided by RES, the project would also necessitate the construction of an operations and maintenance building, an electrical substation, underground electrical cable, an approximately 25-mile transmission line to bring the power to the private power grid, 2-3 meteorological towers, and using existing logging roads as much as possible to allow construction and maintenance to occur.

RES has made various promises regarding the amount of increased taxes that would be paid to the township. The company has also stated that up to 300 construction jobs could be generated, and that there could be 6-8 maintenance jobs once the project is operating. However, the number of these potential jobs generated in the local community or the U.P. is a complete unknown. In fact, RES has their own construction operation. The number of long-term maintenance jobs generated locally could be none at all. RES's business model for wind plants entails obtaining all necessary approvals, constructing the project, and selling it to another entity for long-term operation. In a May 16, 2018 meeting with representatives of RES, their consultants, and Weyerhaeuser, RES stated to a group of concerned citizens that they already have a potential buyer for the project, being an unnamed power company. It is fair to say that RES's stake in the project and the local community is limited to the profit to be made from sale of the project.

The reasonably foreseeable impacts of the proposed Summit Lake project to the natural environment of the Huron Mountains and the citizens of the Upper Peninsula are significant, adverse, long-term, and largely unmitigable. Those impacts far outweigh any benefits, however uncertain, that may result from the project. The L'Anse Township Board should refuse all efforts on the part of RES, Weyerhaeuser, or others to interfere with the L'Anse Township Planning Commission's legal authority to determine their own zoning regulations, and to maintain the prohibition against construction of industrial wind turbines in the Forest District.



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Following are some of the more significant potential impacts that are likely to result from construction and operation of the proposed project.

1. Large-scale short and long-term disturbance and modification to soils, vegetation, and surface water from construction activities.
2. Significant negative changes to the relatively pristine viewshed of the Huron Mountains and surrounding areas.
3. Significant negative impacts to use of the area by local residents and tourists due to the presence of industrial-scale wind turbines.
4. Negative impacts to tourism, which is a mainstay of the local economy.
5. Potential significant impacts to property values in the area surrounding the project.
6. Potential for wildfire caused by failure and combustion of wind turbines, which would be difficult, if not impossible, to control.
7. Potential unmitigable harm to resident and migratory wildlife that use the area. This includes wildlife species protected under federal and Michigan state law, including bald and

golden eagles and other raptors and other species of migratory birds, 324 species of which are documented using the area; the federally-protected northern long-eared bat and other forest bat species; other federally-listed threatened and endangered species including Kirtland's warbler, gray wolf, Canada lynx, piping plover, and red knot, as well as other species that may be listed in the future including the northwestern moose, and many species of special concern listed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. In addition to direct fatalities from wind turbine blades, other wildlife impacts include disturbance and avoidance of the area from the construction and use of access roads, which may result in habitat destruction and fragmentation, and disruption of travel corridors for large carnivores, affecting black bears, gray wolves, and many other species.

8. Potential unknown effects to wildlife, including avoidance of the project area by game and nongame species, and increased levels of cortisol due to stress caused by wind turbines, as reported in European gray wolves and European badgers.

As stated above, the L'Anse Township Board is called upon to support the L'Anse Township Planning Commission's amendment to clarify the language in the zoning ordinance to allow LWECS development in the Conservation/Recreation or General Industrial Districts and prohibit LWECS in the Forest District of L'Anse Township.

Signed:

Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition Officers & Board

21 JUL 18

cc: UPEC Board Members
